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Men or women
262 [756] who believe themselves to be possessed by the spirits of dead chiefs (*ngulu*) start their vocation by sleeping apart from the rest of the community, and giving up porridge in favour of 'cold food'[1] (*ifyatalala*). Later, when their reputation is assured, their passage from ordinary life to the trance of possession is always marked by abstention from *ubwali*, and this fact is commented on excitedly by the rest of the villagers in some such terms as 'Look! He has stopped eating. He is only eating cold things.' It is also not uncommon for an individual who feels himself to be hurt or [626] insulted, to register his protest against his neighbours by refusing porridge in the most ostentatious way possible. There is no need in this case for him to starve completely, but merely to abstain from the staple dish. For instance, a girl, jilted by my cook in specially humiliating circumstances, ate nothing but pumpkins and gourds for four days. This was described to me impressively as, 'Look! Grief has caught her by the throat. She is refusing food.'[2] It was considered the correct conduct for a woman in such circumstances, and I have notes of similar instances on other occasions. All such examples show the extent to which, in ritual as well as fact, *ubwali* stands for 'food' in this particular tribe; and in this emotional attitude to their staple crop I think the Bemba resemble the majority of primitive tribes.

(*b*) *Umunani.* But the native, while he declares he cannot live without *bwali*, is equally emphatic that he cannot eat porridge without a relish (*umunani*), usually in the form of a liquid stew. Both constituents of the meal are essential.

About two pounds of *umunani* would be reckoned as sufficient to eat with five pounds of *ubwali*, and in fact the amount of porridge prepared varies with the supply of relish available. 'When we have little *umunani*, then we cook little porridge', a woman said, and on days when no relish was procurable, it sometimes happened that no porridge was prepared all day (cf. pp. 178–83).[3] Thus it will be seen that to improve the food-supply in this area by increasing the production of millet would be useless without at the same time ensuring an adequate supply of vegetable crops for relish.

The term *umunani* is applied to stews—meat, fish, caterpillars,

[1] This taboo is also connected with the ritual attitude to the handling of fire and the Bemba beliefs as to the impurity caused to food by polluted fire.

[2] *Moneni apa! Cikonko camuikata pa mukoshi! Akane cakulya.*

[3] Men travelling are, however, sometimes forced to do without *umunani* and this is described by a special term *ukutala.*

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really carried out by those who believe themselves to possess black powers'. In other areas, the possession of powers of black magic is inherited in certain families and openly recognized. In other tribes, among them the Babemba, no witch-doctor will ever admit that he possesses any magic of destruction, although he may grudgingly allow that he can sometimes protect those who are attacked by the spell of a sorcerer. In this particular the natives believe that they differ from neighbouring tribes, for I heard of a man who had made a journey to the country of the Batabwa to the North-West, where he said black magic could be openly bought and sold.

This, then, is the question we shall have to ask ourselves in trying to assess the strength of the *Bamucapi*. In accounting for failing luck and disaster, what sum of human ills is debited to the sorcerers' account? It is obvious that the problem is one of practical importance to the administrator. If a native announces that his child has been killed by the evil magic of a fellow human being, he is probably punished with a legal penalty, but if the same native volunteers his bereavement to be due to the anger of his dead great-grandfather, to him an equally credible statement, he will merely be received with a tolerant smile.

Now a characteristic of Bemba belief is the number of different causes to which human ills may be attributed, and of these witchcraft is at first sight not the most important. A man may suffer harm (*a*) because of the anger of his ancestral spirits (*mipaʃi*) to whom he owes certain duties of respect, and who are ultimately responsible for punishing any infringement of tribal law. The spirit of a commoner will punish members of his own particular family, though admittedly not mortally, while the *mupaʃi* of a chief may inflict disaster on the whole land, either in the form of general bad luck, or some dramatic disaster such as a locust plague: (*b*) through the vengeance of a haunting spirit (*ciwa*), the avenging ghost of an ancestor who died neglected, injured, or wrongfully accused by his relatives: (*c*) through the neglect of some important ritual, such, for instance, as that protecting the purity of the household fire; or the breaking of some moral rule such as adultery committed in special circumstances: (*d*) through punishment sent by a chief's *mupaʃi* as the result of a human curse (*kulapiʃya*) when the individual concerned cannot find out who has injured or stolen from him, and calls for divine aid. In all these cases there is one common

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753 feature. Punishment is only inflicted by the supernatural power when it is deserved. The religious dogma follows strictly the tribal morality
769 and gives it its sanction. It stresses particularly that basic sentiment of
626 Bemba society—the attitude of a man to authority in general and in particular to his chief. *Mipaʃi* are injured if not given proper respect, while the whole land suffers if the chief defaults. So also in the case of the avenging *ciwa*, it is the failure to honour and stand by your relations which is punished, the typical case always given being that of the old mother who dies of starvation and neglect. Here again the *ciwa*
[776] may not even return and haunt the living without the permission of Lesa, the High-God, and only a spirit suffering under a legitimate grievance is allowed to avenge. The curse by the name of a dead chief will only light on the real offender.

626 To sum up, according to Bemba dogma most misfortune is believed to be due to wrong-doing, and in particular transgression of the rules
787 of respect to authority. The cause of the disaster can be ascertained by divination, itself a mechanism socially approved and carried out by a reputable character, the *ŋanga*. The remedy can be procured by the purchase of medicine, by the performance of a laborious rite, and perhaps, most important of all, by the public admission of guilt.

754 In this apparently logical and orderly system there is, according to theory, only one incalculable element—the sorcerer (*muloʃi*) who kills without rhyme or reason, for the sake of doing harm. The *baloʃi* are enemies of society and running counter to its laws. They actually start their careers of crime by committing some outrageous act, such as father-daughter incest, or the murder of a baby of their own clan. They have various mythical attributes. They can make themselves invisible; kill at a distance; send magic birds to steal food from their enemies; and of course perform secret rites and possess and sell evil
[828] medicines. Now it is obvious that such sorcerers are actually non-existent, though their mythical attributes are readily credited to unpopular people of dour or difficult temperaments, bad mixers in the American sense, bad sharers, or persons who seem to be winning
754 unusual success at others' expense. I would not be bold enough to say
789 that no rites of evil magic are performed in Bemba country, or that
578 there do not exist here and there individuals who believe themselves to possess such powers. But it is the reflection of the *buloʃi* belief in